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SUBJECT: BUILDING CAPACITY IN NIGERIA'S LABOR MOVEMENT

REF: A. ABUJA 1642

- [B. ABUJA 1366](#)
- [C. ABUJA 1278](#)
- [D. ABUJA 1155](#)
- [E. ABUJA 1091](#)
- [F. ABUJA 791](#)

This is an action request. See Para 5.

¶1. (SBU) Following the failed April 2007 elections, Nigerian civil society turned to the labor movement, and specifically to the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC), for leadership in developing a unified message and mobilizing the populace. Although the labor movement issued strong statements condemning the conduct of the elections, its leadership made a conscious decision to remain outside the political fray. The June 20-23 national strike attracted a strong national following and offered a release valve for the nation's frustration. In many ways, the national strike was the main way in which Nigerians expressed their frustration at government policy -- this despite union membership currently hovering at less than ten percent and the informal sector representing the largest portion of labor. Given the inability of other civil society organizations to mount the kind of support and unity that the labor movement has shown, Post believes capacity building support to the Nigerian labor movement would be a positive step in strengthening civil society at a critical time in Nigeria's democratic development.

¶2. (SBU) Over the past year, LaborOff has noted a critical need for basic capacity-building in the labor sector at the individual union level. While the NLC and TUC are generally well-coordinated and appropriately trained at the national level, individual union leaders in the outlying regions make regular pleas for training on organizing and mobilizing membership, cash flow generation and management, and negotiation strategies -- basic UNION 101 skills. The Michael Imoudu National Institute of Labor Studies (MINILS) in Ilorin, Kwara State offers training to tripartite groups; however, Solidarity Center and union federation representatives have indicated that, as a parastatal organization, MINILS' lacks the capacity among its instructors to address the union side of the equation adequately.

¶3. (SBU) Based on consultations with Solidarity Center, MINILS, NLC and TUC, as well as regional NLC offices, post believes a two-day training workshop carried out at several

regional sites (Nigeria has six geopolitical zones) could substantially improve labor's ability to recruit, retain, educate, and mobilize members. Post envisions a tentative program as follows:

DAY 1: (focused solely on union participants)

- Organizing and mobilizing (to include cash flow generation and management, as well as membership base education).
- Mechanics for dispute resolution, i.e., negotiating strategies

DAY 2: (tripartite participation)

- Implementing and enforcing tripartite agreements, including a discussion of the role of each of the tripartite partners at local, state and national levels.
- The impact of globalization on labor, including discussions of casualization, decent work framework, and work-place rights.
- Day 2 would result in a working group at the regional level to develop a regional strategy for tripartite cooperation, thereby also establishing a platform for future discussions.

14. (SBU) In discussions with the NLC and TUC, both have expressed their interest and support for capacity-building training. As well, MINILS has offered its support and is willing to provide a staff-member to assist with the tripartite portions of a possible program. (MINILS has said they would request assistance to cover travel costs.) Solidarity Center currently possesses in-house expertise to provide training in organizing and mobilizing. There is general agreement that the expertise to discuss the mechanics of dispute settlement from a union point of view would have to come from outside Nigeria. Solidarity Center also

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possesses the regional experience necessary to carry out the planning of such a workshop if funds could be identified.

15. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Post is requesting assistance from DRL and interagency partners to facilitate capacity-building in the Nigerian labor sector in light of its potentially significant impact on democratic development. In addition, we request that DRL use meetings with labor and democracy NGOs to propose support for Nigerian labor movement capacity-building.
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